



THE ASSEMBLY
STATE OF NEW YORK

August 27, 2019

Mr. Hans Vestberg,
CEO, Verizon Communications
140 West Street
New York, NY 10007

Dear Mr. Vestberg,

We are writing to share our concerns regarding the recent decision by Verizon Fios to eliminate original local news programming in the Hudson Valley. As the members of the NYS Assembly representing Westchester County, we request that you reconsider this decision and ensure that original local news programming remains in our communities as original content by Verizon.

It is our strong view that as a provider of cable television service in New York State, Verizon Fios should share the additional obligation of providing local news programming and coverage to the communities it serves.

Local news coverage is in great demand but diminishing supply. While print media coverage has declined nationally, an increasing number of people receive their information through cable and online services. Local coverage is important to the community life in the municipalities we represent. In addition, cable news at the local level has become a means for the public to obtain critical information on local emergencies, disasters, traffic and weather events.

Our view is that the termination of your partnership with RNN was done in haste and that you should reopen negotiations to continue having their team provide the experienced and seasoned journalism they have provided in the past. The RNN team has been covering our region for years. To eliminate the service or replace it with a staff that does not know our region or is not adequately sized to cover our communities is a significant mistake. Our communities are not covered in any significant way by New York City based print, cable or broadcast television news operations. Talk of consolidating service with other providers is also ill-advised. Competition in journalism is good for the public and for democracy. It is also important to note our concern that your proposed action will displace 150 employees, including 90 journalists. We find this action short-sighted and without explanation. Verizon views itself as a member in good standing of our communities. Termination of the RNN contract sends the wrong message.

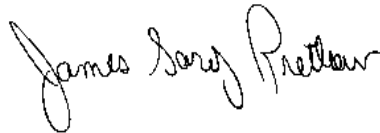
We believe that it is the responsibility of Verizon Fios, and other providers, to offer local news and information programming. We are reviewing the existing state law in this regard, as to your current obligations to ensure that these important services are provided as part of your doing business in our communities. We are willing to pursue changes to state law if necessary to ensure the civic responsibility to provide important communication services is maintained.

We request that you reverse your decision to end the contract with RNN and resume discussions to provide these services in a format that can be agreed to between RNN and Verizon. Let's not lose their experience and knowledge of our communities without making every effort to reach an agreement.

Sincerely,



Amy R. Paulin
Assemblywoman, 88th District



James Gary Pretlow
Assemblyman, 89th District



Nader J. Sayegh
Assemblyman, 90th District



Steven Otis
Assemblyman, 91st District



Thomas J. Abinanti
Assemblyman, 92th District



Kevin Byrne
Assemblyman, 94th District



Sandra Galef
Assemblywoman, 95th District